

REMARKS

Claim Amendments

Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 2. Claim 2 has been cancelled accordingly. Dependent claims 3, 7, 8 and 18 have been amended in view of the amendment to claim 1 and the cancellation of claim 2.

Claim 20 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 21. Claim 21 has been cancelled accordingly. Dependent claims 22, 23, 24, 32 and 33 have been amended in view of the amendment to claim 20 and the cancellation of claim 21.

102(b) Rejection

Claims 1-53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,579,944 to Hafner *et al.* ("Hafner").

Looking at amended independent claims 1 and 20, these claims now require a thermoplastic material comprising a thermoplastic polyurethane and a styrenic thermoplastic elastomer. Turning to Hafner, this patent lists suitable materials for the outer layer as "soft polyethylene, particularly low density and more particularly, linear low density polyethylene, elastomers, polyurethane, ethylvinylacetate (EVA) copolymer, ethylene-ethyl acrylate copolymer, polyethylene-butyl compounds, polyester elastomers and polyisobutylene modified by the addition of other polymers, such as polyethylene, for firming and toughening" (see column 6, lines 8-21). Hafner does not teach or suggest the use of a styrenic thermoplastic elastomer as recited in amended independent claims 1 and 20. Thus, all of the elements of claims 1 and 20 are not taught or suggested in Hafner. Regarding independent claim 35, Hafner does not disclose or suggest a chain link as recited in claim 35 having a main body and link ends. Thus, all of the elements of claim 35 are not taught or suggested in Hafner.

Therefore, it is submitted that independent claim 1 (and claims 2-19 that depend thereon), independent claim 20 (and claims 22-34 that depend thereon), and independent claim 35 (and claims 36-53 that depend thereon) are patentable over Hafner.

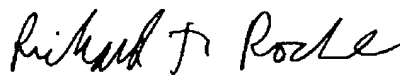
Conclusion

It is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested. No fees are believed to be needed for this amendment. However, if additional fees are needed, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 17-0055.

Respectfully submitted,

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